

Decision _____

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Manfred F. Gildner,

Complainant,

vs.

Southern California Edison Company,

Defendant.

(ECP)

Case 02-06-018

(Filed June 12, 2002)

Manfred F. Gildner, for himself, Complainant.
Patricia A. Aldridge, for Defendant.

OPINION DENYING RELIEF

Complainant alleges that his August 2000 electric bill was \$247.70 and his August 2001 electric bill was \$564.28 for approximately the same amount of usage. He alleges that the substantial increase was caused by a change in his baseline zone. Defendant denied the allegations. Public hearing was held September 6, 2002, before Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Robert Barnett.

Complainant testified that he lives at 4665 David Way in San Bernardino. Since 1985, he was in Baseline Zone 17, but in October 2000 he was placed in Baseline Zone 16, thus, causing his electric bills to increase. He believes this change was in error and requests that his bill be computed based on Baseline Zone 17 quantities and the difference refunded to him. Twenty-five of his

neighbors, similarly situated, testified that their baseline zone was also changed and requested the same relief.¹

Southern California Edison Company's (SCE) witness testified that on or about October 2000, SCE discovered that several accounts in its customer service system (CSS) were coded with an incorrect baseline zone number.

Approximately 7,500 accounts of SCE's over 4.5 million customers were identified as having the wrong baseline zone number. The Thomas Bros. Maps Digital Land Base program provided SCE a street network map for the State of California with address ranges for all streets. SCE used this network to determine, by address, where each meter in its system was located. SCE then overlaid the California Energy Commission (CEC) climatic zone map to determine the correct climatic zone for each address in SCE's system. The baseline zones are determined from the climatic zones. The CEC map was developed in the late 1970's and updated in 1995.

The Thomas Bros. Maps Digital Land Base program provides a percent of accuracy ranking for each address in its database. For the service address of 4665 David Way, San Bernardino, CA 92404, the percent of accuracy is 100%. Thus, since SCE has the service address mapped in its proper place according to the Thomas Bros. maps, the CEC climatic zone map indicated the correct climatic zone that allowed the correct baseline zone to be assigned to Mr. Gildner's account. The witness said complainant (and his neighbors) had been receiving

¹ Baseline Zone 17 allowance is 13.1 KWhs (kilowatt-hour) per day; Baseline Zone 16 allowance is 9.2 KWhs per day.

the benefit of SCE's baseline zone error since 1985. In any case, the difference in complainant's bill between August 2000 and August 2001, was caused by increased use, not baseline quantities.

Complainant, in rebuttal, said that regardless of the error, his address should be in Baseline Zone 17 rather than Zone 16 because the climate differences between the zones in the summer are significant. He said most of Zone 16 is in the cool high altitudes of Lake Arrowhead, while his address is in the very warm low areas of San Bernardino. In the summer Lake Arrowhead can be more than 15°F cooler than the temperature at this address.

SCE responded that it assumes the CEC climatic zone maps are accurate. The CEC climatic zone maps were developed in the late 1970's and are based on temperature, weather, and other factors. A climatic zone is basically a geographic area that has similar climatic characteristics. Within some climatic zones, micro-climates are much more like another climatic zone but for ease of enforcement and simplicity, the CEC avoided creating "pockets" within zones. Maps showing the climatic zones were updated in 1995. During that update, the parameters of Mr. Gildner's climatic zone were not changed, indicating Baseline Zone 16 should have been the assigned baseline zone since the inception of Baseline in 1985.

Complainant's home apparently is located in one of the "pockets" within climatic zones. This is unfortunate, but pockets are inevitable in a state as large as California. The solution, if there is a solution, cannot be implemented in a narrow complaint case, but must be considered in a broader context where competing interests can be heard. Two such proceedings are our Rulemaking regarding Baseline Allowances (Rulemaking 01-05-047) and the current SCE rate case (Application 02-05-004). The switch from Baseline 17 to Baseline 16 was the

correction of an error, which defendant was obligated to do. Complainant has benefited from that error since 1985. Consequently, SCE has behaved properly, and the complaint should be dismissed.

Henry Duque is the Assigned Commissioner and ALJ Barnett is the assigned ALJ.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The relief requested by complainant is denied.
2. This case is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated _____, at San Francisco, California.